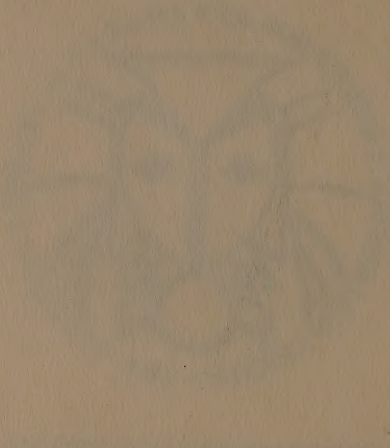
CANADA

PUBLIC ARCHIVES

ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canada



Success attended Morgan, for in 1594 he was elected Bishop of Llandaff, and in 1601 he was translated to the Bishopric of St. Asaph. He died in 1604. It appears that few efforts were made before the time of Morgan to translate any portion of the Bible for the benefit of the Welsh people. There was published in 1551 by William Salisbury, a lawyer, a translation of the portions of Scripture that were appropriate to the communion service. In 1567 he published an entire version of the New Testament into Welsh, in the preparation of which he was aided by the Bishop of St. David's, Dr. Richard Davies, and by the Rev. Thomas Huet, a precentor of St. David's. There is reason for believing that before this time a translation was made of the Pentateuch into Welsh which was never published.

Singular to relate, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1563, in the fifth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, directing that a Welsh version of the Old and New Testament should, under the superintendence of the four Welsh bishops and of the Bishop of Hereford, be prepared for general use in the Welsh churches on the first of March, 1566, and in the event of a non-compliance with that enactment a penalty of forty pounds was to be inflicted on each prelate. Assistance was given to Morgan in the preparation of his translation of the Holy Scriptures by a number of eminent Welsh scholars. The version of the New Testament which was prepared and published by William Salisbury, was adopted by Morgan with some alterations. The Welsh Bible has always been regarded, even from a literary point of view, as the most valuable work in the language. It has been said of it that, after full admission has been made of all its imperfections, it must be regarded as among the noblest attempts to familiarize modern nations with the truths of revelation, and as an imperishable monument of the zeal, learning and industry of its author.

FC3212
C78
1895
fol.

THE FUR TRADE, 1783-7.

BY CAPT. E. CRUIKSHANK.

[*Read 23rd February, 1895.*]

Towards the end of the revolutionary contest, the fur trade had distinctly declined in importance, partly from the disturbed state of the country, but partly also in consequence of the very serious ravages of hunger and disease among the Indians.

In March, 1783, Langlade reported that "there were forty Saulteaux, men, women and children who were eating each other because of the famine in La Baye des Noques," and soon afterwards Cadotte wrote from Sault Ste. Marie to say that "all the Indians of Fond du Lac, Rainy Lake, Lac des Sables, and other surroundings, had died of smallpox." At the same time Captain Robertson, the commandant at Mackinac, complained that a certain Mons. Bouché, a Canadian having a Spanish commission, was levying blackmail from the traders on the Mississippi at the head of "a gang of moroders."

One of the first acts of Sir John Johnson after being appointed Superintendent of the Indian Department, was to make a vigorous effort to assert his authority over the traders scattered throughout the vast region to the westward of Detroit, with the object of securing fair dealing with the natives as far as practicable.

"You are in all matters of trade where the Indians are concerned, to see that the utmost justice be done them," he wrote to Alexander McKee, "for which purpose if the interference of the commanding officer should be necessary, you are to make application, as you are to do in all matters where the king's service is concerned, unconnected with the interior economy of the Indian Department."

It was naturally anticipated that the Americans would "employ every effort to extend as far as possible their frontiers in the upper country, to secure in case of a peace some valuable settlements, and to get the fur trade into their hands."

The efforts of the British officers at Detroit were accordingly directed to the restraint of the Indians from further hostilities, and with this object Major De Peyster stated that he had "indulged" the Wabash Indians "with a trader in order to induce them to stay at home and follow their hunting."

But it could not be foreseen that the astute Franklin would obtain almost without asking, from the easy-going British plenipotentiary, the whole of that vast and valuable territory lying between the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the great lakes. It only remained for them to enter into possession. This, however, was no easy task, for the Indians were intensely hostile, and the new republic was weak in administrative ability.

The original North-west Fur Company, called at the time the "sixteen share concern," had dissolved at the end of a single year. In 1781, a new company, known as the "three share concern," was formed for one year, which did not, however, embrace the English River nor Mississippi within the scope of its operations. The success of this enterprise was sufficient to convince the merchants generally of the benefits of combination, and the number of "adventurers" trading in the North-west had in the meantime been reduced to twelve. Consequently, in October, 1783, a general partnership was agreed upon for five years, in which each stockholder was assigned an interest in proportion to his previous trade. The stock was divided into fifteen shares, of which 9¾ were allotted to non-residents. The expectations of profit were then so limited that one of the old traders readily accepted an offer of an annuity of 4,000 livres (£166, 13s., 4d. currency) in lieu of dividends. He lived to see a clear profit of £2,000 sterling derived from a single share.

The announcement of the terms upon which peace had been concluded overwhelmed the merchants of Montreal with amazement and dismay, for they not unnaturally feared that the fur trade within the frontier of the United States would at once and forever be lost to them.

These apprehensions, however, soon stimulated them to make increased exertions to extend their trade in the Canadian North-west.

In April, 1784, Benjamin Frobisher, one of the most active partners in the new North-west Fur Company, wrote to the Hon. Adam Mabane, a member of the Executive Council, asking definite information respecting the international boundary westward from Lake Superior, as he suspected that the Grand Portage was included by the treaty within the United States, as actually proved to be the case. At the same time he requested a passport for twenty-eight long canoes, valued with their cargoes at £20,000, which the Company intended to despatch to the North-west in May.

"This large supply," he said, "added to the property the Company have already in that country, demands their utmost attention. They do not know how soon they may be deprived of the immediate, and at present the only, communication from Lake Superior, and on that

account they intend, at their own expense, unless Government prefer to undertake it, to discover, if possible, another passage that will in all events fall within the British line, of which they may avail themselves in case of need. Such an undertaking must prove an arduous one and be attended with great expense, while their success will remain very uncertain, on which account the company are induced to hope that if it is discovered it will be granted to them in full right for a certain term of years, not less than seven, as a reward for their public spirit and the advantages that will result to this province from its discovery."

He advised the establishment of a small military post to command the entrance into Lake Superior at Point Aux Pins, where Mr. Baxter had built a small vessel during his unsuccessful mining operations, and suggested that a settlement might easily be founded at that place.

These proposals were favorably received by the Governor, who immediately instructed Captain Robertson to examine the coast near Point Aux Pins and report without delay. Early in June Robertson made the necessary exploration and pronounced in favor of Tessalon, "a beautiful and capacious bay and one of the best harbors on Lake Huron," with good soil and "a very advantageous fall for mills on the River Tessalon, and a large pinery adjacent." He had even sent a party of men to clear the ground for a fort when orders were received to abandon the project, as there was reason to believe that the "posts in the upper country" would not be given up "until the Americans manifested a stronger inclination (than they have hitherto done) to fulfil on their part the articles of the definitive treaty."

Robertson also reported that he had obtained "some intelligence from white men and Indians of a very fertile and advantageous tract of land between Lakes Huron and Ontario, and by communication that way the trade with Canada must be carried on to put us on a footing with our neighbors from the colonies."

In July, Messrs. Benjamin Frobisher and Simon McTavish arrived at Mackinac to make arrangements to suit the new state of affairs, and Robertson wrote to the Governor: "With them I have had several conferences with regard to the future communication to this country so as to enable them or others to trade in those parts on a footing with the Americans, and after every inquiry, that between Lakes Ontario and Huron is the only one to be attempted, and that very practicable, by shortening the road greatly and avoiding the Niagara carrying place and any interference with our neighbors." He evidently referred to the route from Matchedash Bay to Toronto, which was little used and had

become almost forgotten until Robertson declared his intention of returning that way to Quebec when relieved from his command.

In August Mackinac was unexpectedly menaced by an attack from the Ottawas, and the commandant was obliged to summon the traders to his assistance. They naturally complied with alacrity, as there were 4,000 packs of furs in store, 800 of which belonged to the North-west Company.

About the same time the merchants at Detroit, having a large quantity of valuable peltry on hand, asked leave to forward it to Schlosser in three small private sailing vessels, then afloat upon Lake Erie, while the King's ships were otherwise employed, a request which was readily granted by Lieutenant-Governor Hay, immediately after his arrival there.

"The commerce of this place," Hay wrote to Mr. Nepean, "is becoming more and more considerable. The peltry sent from it this year will amount to £100,000 sterling, all of which is the produce of English manufacturers except a small portion of rum, and I think, if the post is not given up, it will increase, for the Spaniards cannot send coarse woolen manufactures up the Mississippi so cheaply as the English can by this communication, a part of which they have this year bartered for their commodities, and in short cannot carry on their trade without them while we keep possession of the lakes."

The North-west Company executed their project of exploration by sending a large canoe to examine the north shore of Lake Superior, "navigated by six Canadians under Mr. Edward Umfreville, who has been eleven years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Mr. Venance St. Germain, both of them men who speak the language of the natives, and who are in other respects very well qualified to execute the Company's intentions.

"Their instructions were to proceed to Lake Alempigon, and thence in a west direction by the best road for transportation of goods and canoes to the River Ouinipique (Winnipeg) at or as near as may be to the Portage de L'Isle, and by letters received from them at Lake Alempigon, 30th June, it appears that they had met with innumerable difficulties from the want of Indian guides, but they then had one who had undertaken to conduct them to Lake Eturgeon, and they expressed the most sanguine hopes of getting forward from thence to the River Ouinipique."

In anticipation of the discovery which this party was expected to make, the Company applied for the "exclusive right to the passage they

may discover from the north side of Lake Superior to the River Ouinipique, and also of the trade to the North-west either by that passage or by the present communication by the Grand Portage for ten years," urging in support of their petition that they were the only persons that had any "interest or connection in that country."

They took advantage of this opportunity to describe the extent of their trade and the manner in which it was conducted.

"The inland navigation by which the North-west business is carried on is perhaps the most extensive of any in the known world, but is only practicable for canoes on account of the great number of carrying places. To give your Excellency some idea of which, there are upwards of ninety from Montreal to Lake du Bois only, and many of them very long ones.

"Two sets of men are employed in this business, making upwards of 500, one half of which are occupied in the transport of goods from Montreal to the Grand Portage in canoes of about four tons burthen, navigated by eight to ten men, and the other half are employed to take such goods forward to every post in the interior country to the extent of 1,000 to 2,000 miles and upwards, from Lake Superior, in canoes of about one and a half tons burthen, made expressly for the inland service, and navigated by four or five men only, according to the places of their destination.

"The large canoes from Montreal always set off early in May, and as the provisions they take with them are consumed by the time they reach Michilimackinac, they are necessitated to call there merely to take in an additional supply, not only for themselves but also for the use of the canoes intended for the interior country and the consumption of their servants at the Grand Portage, but as these canoes are not capable of carrying the whole of such provisions it thence becomes necessary to have a vessel or boats upon Lake Superior for that transport only, and the utmost despatch is required that everything may be ready in point of time to send off their supplies for the interior country, for which purpose the goods, provisions, and everything else required for the outfits of this year must be at the Grand Portage early in July, for the carrying place being at least ten miles in length, fifteen days are commonly spent in this service, which is performed by the canoe-men, who usually leave the west end from the 15th July to the 1st August, according to the distance of the places they are intended for.

"Their general loading is two-thirds goods and one-third provisions, which not being sufficient for their subsistence until they reach winter

quarters they must, and always do, depend on the natives they occasionally meet on the road for an additional supply, and when this fails, which is sometimes the case, they are exposed to every misery that it is possible to survive, and equally so in returning from the interior country, as in the spring provisions are generally more scanty. In winter quarters, however, they are at ease and commonly in plenty, which can only reconcile them to that manner of life and make them forget their sufferings in their annual voyage to and from the Grand Portage.

"The property the Company have already in that country, exclusive of their houses and stores and the different posts, as appears by the settlement of their accounts this present year, amounts to the sum of £25,303, 3s., 6d. currency, and their outfits for next spring, which will be sent from Montreal as soon as the navigation opens, will not fall much short of that sum, so that the Company will have an interest in July next of about £50,000 original cost in furs, to be sent to Montreal by the return of their canoes, and in goods for the interior country, by which your Excellency may judge of what may be expected from that trade when in our power by an exclusive right for ten years to explore the country and extend it."

In a few months this was followed by a second memorial from Peter Pond, who described himself as a partner in the Company, and who had been actively engaged in the exploration of the North-west in pursuit of trade for ten years. Pond declared that he had obtained positive information from "natives who have lately been on the shores of North Pacific Ocean," that the Russians had lately established a trading-station there, and further that he was credibly informed that ships were being fitted out in the United States under "the command of experienced seamen (who accompanied Captain Cook in his last voyage) in order to establish a fur trade upon the north-west coast of America at or near Prince William's Sound." From the carefully drawn map which accompanied his memorial, it appears that Pond had visited Fort Dauphin in 1775, and in 1776 and 1777 reached the site of the most distant trading post established by the French upon the Upper Saskatchewan. From 1778 to 1784 he had wintered near the mouth of the Athabasca. Frobisher traded near the ruins of Fort de Trait in 1774 and wintered in 1777 on a peninsula at Clearwater Lake.

On the 1st of August, 1785, James McGill formally announced the discovery of the new route to the North-west, in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton.

"A new road has been discovered from the Lake of ——— or Nipigan, which runs to the N. of Wood Lakes and falls to the discharge of that

lake (which is commonly known by the name of the River) at the distance of fifty leagues from its N.W. termination. It was gone over last summer and found to be more practicable than the road from Grand Portage now in use."

"The upper country trade in general," he remarked, "as now carried on from this place (Montreal) is extended as far south as the mouth of the Ohio; to the westward as far as the rivers falling from that side of the Mississippi will carry canoes, including from the river of ———— (Arkansas?) in latitude 33° S. to the sources of the Mississippi; and to the north-west as far as Lake Arabaska, including the whole north side of Lakes Huron and Superior. The value of the whole I esteem at £180,000 currency for sake of statement, and I believe I am not £20,000 on either side of the realty—£100,000 value, I think, is brought from the country now within the American line as fixed by the late treaty of peace; the other £80,000 I consider as being within our own line."

He strongly urged that the merchants should be permitted to build small decked vessels for the navigation of the lakes instead of being forced to depend upon the "King's ships" to transport their property. "With them," he said, "they can be morally certain of having their goods at market in June or July, and their goods may be imported the same year from England, which will save them from leakage, embezzlement, and waste of their property, besides interest of money, which, you know, is a dreadful moth if once allowed to get to any head."

This reasonable request was backed by a petition from twenty-one merchants of Detroit, and by another from the North-west Company, which had the year before built the sloop Beaver, intending to take her up the rapids into Lake Superior, but finding that impracticable, now asked permission to employ this vessel in the navigation of Lakes Erie and Huron. The Detroit merchants asserted that "last year owing to the late arrival of such goods as did reach this post, about one thousand packs of furs and peltry which used annually to be remitted to Detroit have this year, from our inability to supply the traders in time, been sent to New Orleans, and that upwards of fifty of the pettyaugers which left this place last fall loaded with goods proper for the Indian trade, were from their late departure frozen up before they reached the places of destination, and that many traders after a fruitless attendance returned unsupplied." In short, "trade in general and this branch in particular had been much circumscribed and of late nearly ruined."

On the other hand, Dease, the Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Department at Niagara, complained bitterly of the lawless and unprincipled conduct of some of the traders.

Pamphlet